

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3218

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1415

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SY

SUBJ: SIXTH BAATH PARTY REGIONAL CONGRESS

REF: DAMASCUS 1384

1. SUMMARY: SIXTH BAATH PARTY REGIONAL CONGRESS
MET APRIL 5-14. IT ADOPTED NUMBER OF RESOLUTIONS
IN DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN SPHERES INCLUDING STATEMENT
OF TOTAL SUPPORT FOR PALESTINIANS. CONGRESS MET
IN ATMOSPHERE OF TIGHT SECURITY FOLLOWING ARREST OF
"PRO-IRAQI" SYMPATHIZERS, I.E., THOSE WHOM REGIME
WANTED OUT OF THE WAY DURING PERIOD OF CONGRESS.
CONGRESS DROPPED SEVEN PREVIOUS SUNNI MEMBERS
REGIONAL COMMAND; FOUR OF SEVEN REPLACEMENTS ARE
ALAWITE. NAJI JAMIL MAY LOSE IMPORTANT INTELLIGENCE
POSITION AND RIF'AT AL-ASAD SUCCEEDED IN MANUEVERING
HIS WAY ONTO RC PROBABLY AGAINST PRESIDENT ASAD'S
WISHES. END SUMMARY.

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2. SIXTH BAATH PARTY REGIONAL CONGRESS MET IN

DAMASCUS FROM APRIL 5-14. APPROXIMATELY 400 VOTING MEMBERS ATTENDED SESSIONS WHICH MET UNDER VERY TIGHT SECURITY PRECAUTIONS. CONGRESS DIVIDED ITSELF INTO FOUR COMMITTEES: ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY, ECONOMIC POLICY, ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY, AND DOMESTIC POLICY. WE UNDERSTAND THAT DELEGATES PERMITTED CHOSE COMMITTEE THEY DESIRED SERVE ON, AND MOST CHOSE DOMESTIC POLICY COMMITTEE. IN BREAK WITH PAST PRACTICE OF STRICT SECRECY SURROUNDING PARTY CONGRESS MEETINGS, SYRIAN MEDIA GAVE SIGNIFICANT ATTENTION TO CONGRESS ACTIVITIES. PRESS REPORTED ON RESOLUTIONS PROPOSED BY EACH OF FOUR COMMITTEES AND, CONTRARY TO PAST PRACTICE, ANNOUNCED NAMES OF NEW REGIONAL COMMAND.

3. ARAB AND INTERNATIONAL POLICY. CONGRESS CALLED FOR MORE STEPS TOWARD COMPREHENSIVE ARAB UNITY, FOR CONSOLIDATING ARAB SOLIDARITY, FOR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS IN ASIA, AFRICA AND LATIN AMERICA MORALLY AND MATERIALLY, FOR CREATION SYRIAN-PALESTINIAN JOINT COMMAND, AND CONDEMNED IRAQ FOR VARIOUS NATIONAL CRIMES AND BETRAYALS. ON PALESTINE, IT CALLED FOR RECOVERY OF PALESTINIAN RIGHTS AND ASSISTANCE TO PALESTINIAN ARAB PEOPLE IN ESTABLISHING INDEPENDENT NATIONAL AUTHORITY IN ANY PORTION OF LAND OF PALESTINE TO BE LIBERATED, AND FOR CONTINUATION OF STRUGGLE TO LIBERATE ENTIRE PALESTINIAN HOMELAND.

4. ECONOMIC POLICY. CONGRESS RESOLVED TO WORK FOR ENACTMENT OF LEGISLATION GUARANTEEING ECONOMIC ACCOUNTABILITY AT ALL LEVELS (AN ANTI-CORRUPTION REFERENCE), TO MODIFY STRUCTURE OF AGRICULTURAL COOPERATIVE SOCIETIES, AND TO STRENGTHEN PUBLIC SECTOR AS LEADING SECTOR IN NATIONAL ECONOMY.

5. ORGANIZATIONAL POLICY. CONGRESS ADOPTED NUMBER OF RESOLUTIONS PERTAINING TO PARTY ORGANIZATION, INCLUDING ENLARGING PARTY BASE AMONG MASSES, CONTINUING DEVELOPMENT OF SCHOOLS FOR PARTY CADRE, AND EMPHASIZING

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ROLE OF BAATH PARTY AS VANGUARD OF ARAB REVOLUTION.

6. DOMESTIC POLICY. CONGRESS DECIDED TO EXPAND LOW-COST PUBLIC HOUSING, IMPLEMENT MEDICAL SECURITY SYSTEM, IMPROVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM TO PUT AN END TO CURRENT TRANSPORT CRISIS, AND EXPAND ELECTRIFICATION EFFORTS THROUGHOUT SYRIA.

7. WAVE OF ARRESTS THAT PRECEDED CONFERENCE GAVE RISE TO STORIES MOSTLY IN BEIRUT PRESS OF AN IRAQI COUP ATTEMPT HAVING BEEN UNCOVERED. ARRESTS DID INDEED OCCUR (DAMASCUS 1271) BUT NO EVIDENCE HAS SURFACED OF ANY DIRECT IRAQI INVOLVEMENT. RATHER, THEY APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN RESULT OF HEAVY-HANDED METHODS OF ASAD'S SECURITY APPARATUS TO CONTROL DIRECTION AND OUTCOME OF CONGRESS.

8. REGIONAL COMMAND. FOREIGN MINISTRY SOURCE, WHO IS FORMER BAATH PARTY OFFICIAL, TOLD US THAT ALL SEVEN MEMBERS OF OLD RC WHO WERE DROPPED IN THIS ELECTION WERE SUNNI, AND THAT FOUR OF SEVEN NEW MEMBERS WERE ALAWITE. HE ADDED THAT NAJI JAMIL WOULD PROBABLY LOSE HIS KEY FUNCTION AS DIRECTOR NATIONAL SECURITY APPARATUS, WHICH OVERSEES ALL SARG INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES AS RESULT OF HIS NONREELECTION. RIF-'AT ASAD'S ELECTION, ACCORDING TO SOURCE, HERALDS SWING TO MORE REPRESSIVE ATMOSPHERE SINCE RIF-'AT IS A "LEFTIST" ADMIRER BY COMMUNIST PARTY.

9. RIF'AT'S ELECTION IS CERTAINLY A KEY EVENT OF CONGRESS AND ONE WHICH HIS BROTHER, THE PRESIDENT, DID NOT WANT. IT EMPHASIZES MILITARY PREDOMINANCE IN PARTY AS WELL AS OPENING PRESIDENT TO CHARGES OF NEPOTISM (JAMIL AL-ASAD, A THIRD BROTHER AND AN OFFICER IN REF'AT'S REPUBLICAN GUARD, WAS ELECTED AS ALTERNATE MEMBER OF REGIONAL COMMAND). RIF'AT CAMPAIGNED HARD TO ELECT HIS CANDIDATES TO CONGRESS AND REPORTEDLY TOOK ACTIVE ROLE IN CONGRESS ITSELF. HIS SUCCESS IS RESULT OF HIS OWN EFFORTS AND AMBITIONS AND NOT HIS BROTHER'S SPONSORSHIP. THE PRESIDENT AS WELL AS THE REST OF SYRIA WILL HAVE TO CONFIDENTIAL

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LIVE WITH HIM IN HIS ENHANCED ROLE.
MURPHY

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NNN

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